

How I Journal



Chris Bowler

[Follow](#)

Mar 20, 2018 · 4 min read ★



Courtesy of the Day One team

After last week's focus on using pen & paper alongside digital tools, I had a few people ask me questions about how I

journal. Rather than repeat myself over several emails, I thought I'd answer those here.

Vikas Navani asks,

I would love to know more about your Journaling process. Do you journal in a notebook? Is it everyday? What time during the day do you journal? What's the format of your journaling?

And my friend and co-worker Rian asks,

Do you use a template?

There have been other people asking questions, but they mostly fall under the categories listed in the questions here.

First of all, I do all my journalling in Day One. I love my pen and paper, but I do not love the activity of writing by hand. My notebook usage tends to be purposeful layouts (i.e. my habit tracker), regular templates (i.e. my weekly plan), and quickly scribbled lists. I enjoy tracking things on paper, but not writing.

So journalling happens in Day One.

Do I journal every day? Yes, and no. Yes, something goes into Day One every day. But no, I do not sit down and record the thoughts or events of each and every day.

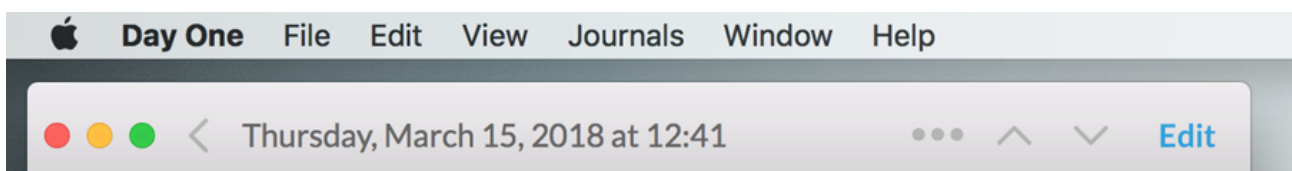
My perception that when most people think of journalling, they think of a diary type of resource where the activity is recording your feelings, thoughts, events of life, and plans for the future. I only use my journal in this way occasionally.

How I use Day One is evident in the five journals I have included there (you can have more than one). They are...

Bible Study: this is where I track my devotional time each day. I'll note what passages I read, the things I prayed for, plus paste in a verse(s) that I was meditating on and my thoughts on it. This one does get filled in almost every single day and is even an item I include in my habit tracker

Personal: This is the type of journal I refer to above, the common way of thinking of journalling. Here I include my thoughts on life, plans I'm considering, pictures of our kids and records of the memorable events in their lives, my weekly reviews, and completed home maintenance tasks.

Reading: Day One is also a commonplace book for me as well as a place to track my thoughts and feelings. I've written about this for The Sweet Setup, but in short I have various IFTTT recipes that grab information from other sources and add entries to Day One.



Like a lot of people in today's modern society, I often have a direct correlation between knowledge gathering and not applying that information to my actions in a meaningful way

The "Basecamp MBA" Reading List - Signal v. Noise

[View original](#)

Instapaper

A good example is my highlights from Instapaper: when I highlight a passage in an article there, it gets automatically saved as a new entry in my reading journal. When I sit down to write an issue of this newsletter, I review that journal to find a quote of the week.

Reports: This one is something I'm considering of removing. I have more IFTTT recipes that grab entries from RescueTime and Strava and add them as an entry in this journal. But I do not find myself valuing these entries and am considering deleting this entirely. Or focusing on my runs and removing the rest.

Wildbit: Last, I track my work activities here. This is one journal that is regular: I have a daily recurring task called Complete Shutdown Routine. A big part of that is recording what I accomplished through the day. I don't get to it every single workday, but it's pretty consistent.

These entries are not long — just one or two lines to summarize the

day, then a bulleted list of what I did. Occasionally, I'll add thoughts on *why* I did something so I can later recall the thinking that led to a decision.

Usage

Again, my entries for the Personal journal are irregular and I do not use templates. In this area, I journal spontaneously when the notion strikes. However, it is something I would prefer to do more regularly. And so it's also one of the items I include on my monthly habit tracker.

But the Bible Study and Wildbit journals receive regular entries. The Reading and Runs journals receive updates automatically when I have time to read or run (or when I'm not dealing with an injury). So there is some automation, some entries are almost exclusively added on macOS (Wildbit entries), and some almost exclusively on iOS (Bible Study).

However, reviewing and reading entries happens almost completely on iOS. I have a couple of recurring tasks to review certain things in Day One quarterly. And one of my favourite aspects of Day One is "On this day". Once per day, the iOS version of the app shows a banner that takes me to all the entries that were created on a specific day.

One last thought. Rian asked about templates, and I mentioned I

do not use them. However, my notebook and weekly plan are a similar use case. Every week I list out one piece of Scripture to focus on, my goals, but also my wins, lessons learned, and things I'm thankful for over the previous week. Once completed, I snap a picture of this page and add it to an entry in my Personal journal.

That is a bit of the more traditional journaling people think of. Just in a different format. And that's what is great about the habit — we have a lot of amazing tools that give us flexibility.

. . .

Have you tried journaling yourself but struggle to make it stick? Three small steps helped me make this a regular habit over the past six years.

Originally published at chrisbowler.com.

Writing Journaling Productivity Self-awareness

Discover Medium

Welcome to a place where words matter. On Medium, smart voices and original ideas take center stage - with no ads in sight. Watch

Make Medium yours

Follow all the topics you care about, and we'll deliver the best stories for you to your homepage and inbox. Explore

Become a member

Get unlimited access to the best stories on Medium — and support writers while you're at it. Just \$5/month. Upgrade

[About](#)

[Help](#)

[Legal](#)

You have two free stories left this month.

